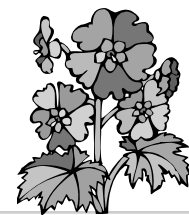


# The Primrose



Vol. 33, Issue 4

TCF Broome County Chapter Newsletter

Winter 2013



## THANKSGIVING

By Bev Rosen Katowitz~ Charlotte, NC, TCF Chapter

November, cool days, chilly nights, autumn leaves changing colors, football games, apple cider and pumpkin pie. Ah, November... Is it November already? Oh, no! Make it go away! Just let me sleep; wake me up in January. November is here, the start of the holiday season.

This is the time of year most bereaved parents dread. This is the time of year when thoughts turn to spending time with family, friends and celebrating. Holiday decorations start popping up everywhere you turn, and holiday music begins to play at the malls and on the radio. People are busy cleaning their homes and are all abuzz with getting ready for ...Oh, no! Thanksgiving! Everyone is asking, "What are you doing for Thanksgiving?" For the bereaved parent, especially the newly bereaved, this question can become daunting and almost horrifying. What am I doing for Thanksgiving? Thanksgiving~giving thanks. But, I don't feel very thankful.

How can I be thankful, when my child lives no more?  
How can I be thankful, when he/she will never again walk through my front door?  
How can I be thankful, when my eyes are filled with tears?  
How can I be thankful, when he/she won't be here throughout the years?  
How can I be thankful, when my heart will never mend?  
How can I be thankful, when I've lost my dearest friend?  
How can I be thankful, when his/her hugs and kisses have now ceased?  
How can I be thankful, and sit down to a feast?  
How can I be thankful, when my heart is filled with sorrow?  
How can I be thankful, when I can hardly make it to tomorrow?

What do you answer? What will you do this year? For some, the choice is to keep the same tradition they have in the past. Others choose to remain home and ignore the holiday completely. There are parents who go on vacation, or go out to Thanksgiving dinner at a restaurant. Newly bereaved parents may question, "What am I supposed to do?" There is no standard right or wrong answer. Whatever feels the most comforting is the right answer for you. Family members or friends might disagree with your decision and say you are wrong. This often happens if you decide to break tradition, want to be alone, or decide not to celebrate at all. People can become very insistent and tell you that Thanksgiving is about being with others. I have found that my choice has varied over the years, from choosing to be alone, and not acknowledge the holiday at all, to going to friends' and family members' homes, to just having dinner at home, and when asked, I say, "I know that you may not like my answer, but still, I need to do what is best for me."

However you decide to spend this Thanksgiving, please remember that for however short or long your precious, awesome amazing, wonderful child was with you here on earth, you are blessed to be their parent. You have been given a most spectacular gift ~ a one-of-a-kind, unique, extraordinary child to carry in your heart, thoughts and soul for all eternity. And this is a reason to be forever thankful. From my home and heart to yours, may you have a blessed Thanksgiving and may it be filled with peace.

## **The Compassionate Friends, Inc.**

### **National Office Information**

Phone Number (toll free) (877) 969-0010

Fax Number (630) 990 -0246

Mailing address: P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

E-mail: [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

Web address: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Regional Coordinator

Al Visconti (518) 756-9569

## **PARENTS RESOURCE CORNER**

Please feel free to call the following people if you wish to speak to someone whose child's death was caused in a manner similar to your child's.

Accidental – Pam Kroft	Ph: 239-4222
Illness - Shirley Mehal	785-5710
Adult child - Claudia Simonis	648-6715
Suicide - Cindy Hutchinson	757-9465

## **The Compassionate Friends of Broome County**

1250 Front Street, # 147 Binghamton, NY 13901

Web Address:

<http://tcfbc.homestead.com/Home.html>

**For information pertaining to the  
The Compassionate Friends of Broome County, call:  
Pam Kroft (607) 239-4222**

### **Monthly Meetings**

First Monday of each month 7:00 - 9:00 PM

Third or fourth Saturday 10 AM – 12 PM

Nimmonsburg United Methodist Church

918 Upper Front Street Binghamton, NY 13901

(across from BCC)

### **Steering Committee**

Chapter Leader & Delegate - Pam Kroft

Assistant Chapter Leader - Donna Cunningham

Outreach - Luann Ford, Elaine Sahre

Carol Selby & Hank Nanni

Library - Sherry Bailey

Hospitality – Jean Scolaro

Treasurer – Val Ambrose

Newsletter Editor – Val Ambrose

Website Master - Marv Conover

Secretary - Angela Carro

Programs/Events - **OPEN**

**\*\*\* We Need Help \*\*\***

**Please consider joining our steering  
committee**

**Call Pam Kroft for information**

## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

### **Meetings:**

**First Monday 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM**

**Unless otherwise indicated**

**Third or fourth Saturday 10:00 A.M.**

**(Check calendar!)**

### **NIMMONSBURG UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**918 Front Street, Binghamton**

**(Across from BCC, next to the Credit Union.**

**Parking in the rear, enter through rear door.)**

**December 2nd, 2013 (Monday)**

**7:00 PM “Holiday Despair, Help!”**

**December 8th, 2013 (Sunday)**

**6:00 PM “Candle light Service”**

**December 21st, 2013 (Saturday)**

**10:00AM OPEN Forum**

**January 6th, 2014 (Monday)**

**7:00 PM “Overwhelming Anger”**

**January 18th, 2014 (Saturday)**

**10:00AM OPEN Forum**

**February 3rd, 2014 (Monday)**

**6:00 PM “How Many Children?”**

**February 15th, 2014 (Saturday)**

**10:00AM OPEN Forum**

**March 3rd, 2014 (Monday)**

**7:00 PM “Memory Night”**

The Primrose is published quarterly  
Deadline for newsletter materials:  
February 1st: May 1st: August 1st: November 1st

Send Information to: Val Ambrose 730 River Rd.

Binghamton, NY 13901

Or email [JTL7899@yahoo.com](mailto:JTL7899@yahoo.com)

**NOTICE: If you receive this newsletter,  
forwarded through the funeral home, please call  
Val Ambrose at (607 648-8598) with your correct  
address so new issues can be mailed directly to you.**



## ROSES ON THE SNOW

What is the point of laying eight yellow roses on the February snow?

What was the point with seven of them last year?

And when there were six the year before?

What about the others back to the very first two dropped on the snow six years ago?

What's the point in leaving rosebuds to freeze and turn brown atop the wintry glaze sealing her grave?

The bushy arms of a stern cedar overhead can't protect them.

The fall of a soft hill only funnels winter's icy winds more cruelly across such fragile flowers.

And despite warm promises from daylight's westerly sun,

Nightfall's mortal chill always gets its way.

Why indeed keep an annual birthdate with the florist

just to abandon a handful of teardrop roses on the February snow?

Because while the trees will fail, and the hills and sun alike, a father's tears care forever.

And like roses on the snow, they die only in form, never in Spirit.

~Gary Grant TCF - Piedmont, VA



### A NEW YEAR IS FOR HOPE

It has a different number.

Days have gone by.

We've accumulated more time between  
ourselves and our child's death.

We may have

rearranged our perspective

have different ideas about,

what is most important

and what hardly matters.

In this new year, we know that there will

be ups & downs;

some good moments and some bad.

And if we take just one moment,

just one hour,

just one step at a time

**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT.**

~Joan Schmidt TCF - Central Jersey

### A NEW YEARS EVE VISIT

As the blue moon

was rising

A great horned

hooted

And I made a snow angel

on your grave.~

Kim Bodeau

In memory of David, TCF Chippewa Valley

### WHERE DO I GO?

Now that you're gone, where do I go

to see your fair smile

to hear your tingling giggle

to smell your dank hair after a swim

to listen to your questions

to touch your gentle cheek

to feel your bear hug?

Where do I go

to share all my years of wisdom

to find someone who'll tell me truth

to answer the phone that won't ring

to tell you I'm sorry

to know that I am loved and

to pour out my love and my tears?

I shall go

to the pictures that hold you forever

to the books we shared

to the music you taught me to love

to the woods we explored as one

to the memories that never fail

to the innermost reaches of my heart

to where we are always together.

~Marcia Alig

TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey

## A NOTE FROM OUR CHAPTER LEADER:

Hello Everyone,

Each morning on awakening and after snoozing the alarm at least twice, I wipe the sleep from my eyes, and indulge in an episode of "I Love Lucy." Lucy, Desi, Ethel and Fred are the funniest and most comedic foursome ever. Whether I am in need of a smile [and who isn't] or not, it's a great way to start my day. In my early days and months following Sean's death I wish I had tuned into Lucy and Desi. Maybe the slapstick comedy would have soothed my sadness if only for a moment, reminding me of laughter, that word that becomes so foreign to us after our child dies. We all feel that words like laughter, happiness and joy don't belong in our vocabularies anymore. More so the feelings that come from those words are so far from our reach that no matter how many ladders we climb it's seems impossible to gather those happy words back into our lives. Be patient, my friend, patience is what grieving demands of us.

In a few short days on December 8<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 p.m. we will be gathering at Nimmonsburg Methodist Church for our annual candle lighting. I have grown over the years to rely on this event to start my holiday season, to remind me to take the time for what's important and to remember all our children gone too soon. As the candles are lit and the names are read we return to a brief moment with our child possibly with a tear in our eye or a smile on our face all the while our hearts filled with love and hope. If you are up to cooking or baking, a dish to pass is always appreciated and a photo of your child for our memory table. Our beautiful angel tree will hold court in the fellowship hall, please put an angel on the tree in memory of your child and if you are able a donation is appreciated, gently reminding everyone we are solely funded by our membership. Because of the time of year let us be reminded if there is a state of emergency the event will be cancelled but everyone is encouraged to light a candle in your window as our child's light shall shine for 24 hours worldwide. If you are not able to attend call me @239-4222 and a candle will be lit and your child's name read during the service. Putting the whole weather topic aside our night will be filled with renewing old friendships and making new. I hope to see you there to remember our children gone too soon.

A special welcome to Hank Nanni and Carol Selby for joining us on our steering committee, they will be helping with TCF outreach into our community. I also would like to thank all the members of the committee for their dedication and years of service. Somehow as we join this committee we never leave, you all know who you are! What we do is done for all the bereaved parents who are struggling with their future without their child. Our steering committee is the backbone of our local TCF, offering hope, understanding and friendship during the needed times after a child dies.

Daily we are reminded of our hopes and dreams that were lost after our child died. Let us end this year and begin 2014 with a better sense of ourselves and what we are capable of achieving in their absence. Unfortunately we can not have our children back but we can do something for someone else in their memory, a small kind gesture, an encouraging word or a hug, it may help to bring peace to their lives and bring a bit of hope back to ours. Because we are all at different places in our grieving sometimes my asking you to tune into "I Love Lucy" may be overwhelming at first but small doses of laughter should not be guilt ridden or taboo. I also remember saying aloud, "I would never laugh again" but it happened and I truly believe Sean is o.k. with that.

My wish for you in the 2014 is 365 days of good health, less sadness and the hope for a day or two of Lucy laughter, maybe just starting with a small smile because of a thought reminding us our child. We all deserve that word back in our vocabulary after the many ladders we have climbed along this grief path. Thank you for taking the hand of a parent in need and for always being there for each other.

Hugs,  
Pam Kroft  
(Sean's Mom)

## A Flicker in the Distance

In this time of grief,  
When the darkness is so great,  
And your heart is aching so,  
You feel that it may break.

Remember that in this darkness  
There is a candle's light  
A flicker in the distance  
Small but intensely bright.



That tiny little glow  
That seems so far away  
Will grow brighter and brighter  
With each passing day.

Time does not heal, as they say,  
But it tends to numb  
The ache we feel inside our heart  
When that darkness comes.

In time your heart will feel lighter  
And the memories won't bring such pain  
The tears won't flow as often  
And you will find laughter again.

So keep your eye on that distant glow  
To see how far you came...  
Because at the end of the darkness  
That flicker becomes a flame.

Jacquelyn M. Comeaux

## One Small Star by John McDermott

When I need to feel you near me  
I stand in this quiet place  
Where the silver light of countless stars  
Falling on my face  
Though they all shine so brightly  
Somehow it comforts me to know  
That some that burn the brightest  
Died an eternity ago

I'm learning how to live without you  
And I never thought I could  
And even how to smile again  
I never thought I would  
And I cherish your heart's memories  
Cause they bring you back to life  
Some caress me gently  
And some cut me like a knife

Can your soul be out there somewhere  
Beyond the infinity of time  
I guess you've found some answers now  
I'll have to wait for mine  
When my light joins with yours one day  
We'll shine through time and space  
And one day fall on a distant age  
Upon some stranger's face



But your light still shines  
It's one small star to guide me  
And it helps me to hold back the dark  
Your light's still shining in my heart

## Grief Tip – A Fresh Start .....

The New Year can bring a feeling of a fresh start after loss. It's a time to make an effort to heal your grief going forward. Think about the kind of life you want to be living and the kind of people you want to be around you. Make an effort to surround yourself with hope by joining a support or education group. Engage in activity. It can change you from being lonely to being willing to become social again.

Now is the time to begin again.

*OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED Fall and Winter*

*In each issue, we reach out with our arms and hearts to the parents who will be facing difficult days during the next three months. Please remember them on the anniversary of the death of their child. The children's names listed are those of parents who have made a love gift and are subscribing to the Primrose.*

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OUR CHILDREN REMEMBERED *continued*

## **Twelve Ways to Face the Twelve Days of Christmas and Other Festive Occasions by Paul Alexander**

### **1. Set Boundaries on Your Own and Other's Expectations.**

Planning for the holidays and deciding on practical matters may be overwhelming. Set priorities and limits on what you do and don't do. If it's too much, to cook or decorate, ask others to help or delegate chores including shopping and decorating.

### **2. Change a Tradition if Just for this Year.**

Have dinner somewhere else; make it a buffet instead of a sit down. Go to a different place of worship. Change the location of the tree or other holiday decorations or leave them out completely. Go with the flow of your heart.

### **3. Be Flexible...Nothing is Written in Stone.**

The wonderful thing about a mind is that you can always change it. Grief can cause unpredictable mood swings. If you make a plan always communicate your need for an open door policy. This is not the time to worry about what others think of you.

### **4. Have a Family Meeting or Phone Conference.**

Before making decisions it might be helpful to share your feelings, needs and suggestions. One way to do this is to just give everyone a time to speak without interruption and without judgment. Listen to each other and try to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

### **5. Listen to the Children.**

If there are children in the family circle listen to their ideas and suggestions. Include them in the problem solving and in the planning. Out of the mouths of babes often come wisdom that can be useful for planning the day as well as acknowledging their grief feelings and importance to the family.

### **6. Remember That Gifts Come in Many Shapes and Sizes...and They're not Always Wrapped.**

What is the gift your loved one gave you? If you give gifts, share something that in some way connects the gift to your loved one, their hobby or favorite color. If shopping malls are too stressful, use catalogues, Gift certificates or even special items that belonged to your loved one.

### **7. Take Time for Rest and Create a Day of Self-Care.**

The stress of grief and the holiday madness can create undue anxiety and tension. Take time for relaxation, whether it be a massage, exercise, or a day in the country. Do something for yourself!

### **8. Honor Your Emotional Life.**

To thine own self be true. Take time to talk about your feelings and thoughts with a friend or loved one. Sometimes attempting to be strong is just not necessary. Make time for rituals and healing moments that permit access to your heart and spirit.

### **9. Don't be Afraid to Mention Your Loved One and Share Memories.**

Honor the life of your loved one by saying their name, displaying photo albums, talking about favorite memories, lighting a candle in their honor. Letting others know your comfort in talking about your loved one will help them open up as well.

### **10. Do Something Totally Different.**

If you need to get away to a new location or completely delete the holiday experience, do so and let go of the guilt. Although we know we cannot run away from the grief, sometimes we need a space and place far removed from the everyday reminders. If that is so, give yourself permission and go.



## Twelve Ways continued...

### 11. Connect to the Spiritual.

Some find it walking on the beach, some in church, some in meditation, music and prayer. Do whatever it is for you that somehow brings you to the quiet place within.

### 12. Make Some Kind of Plan.

Remembering that anything can be changed at the last minute, have some tentative plan for some time in the day. Be gentle with yourself. This will not be a perfect day... Listen to your heart and to an inner wisdom.

## WHEN A LIFE BREAKS .....

After suicide, the first commandment is kindness, both toward the life that has broken and toward ourselves. We need to beware of using against ourselves some preconceived notions about suicide.

If our child has taken his or her own life, many people feel compelled to comment that the dead sufferer should not have hurt THAT much. Moreover, the religious community removes grace, the social community judges character, the medical community pronounces insanity. If the concept of unbearable pain is admitted at all, we are told that either (1) the suicide's faith was weak, or (2) her/his expectations were immodest, or (3) she/he was mean and selfish. It must have been a weakling who said: Every person has his or her breaking point: - right? WRONG!

The truth is that most of us have wondered about ending it all – because life does SEEM unmanageable at times. And we acknowledge the possibility that life IS unmanageable for long stretches. Who is to say that we are always obliged or able to meet an overwhelming darkness with the strength and/or the will of a heroic super saint? We are all vulnerable, we can all feel lost and frightened and without hope. It is arrogant to assume that everyone is equipped to overcome even the most extreme challenge (whether real or imaginary) with fortitude, mastery and success.

Some of us are angry after suicide has happened close to us. Most of us are incredibly hurt and helpless. We feel betrayed, we feel abandoned, even punished. We often blame ourselves for some carelessness, some omission, some selfishness, and some cruelty, which caused that fatal break of life..... It can be a long time before there comes a small and unexpected comfort when reality reminds us that the suicide was, as it were, bigger than life.

Western society has little love for those who take their own life, nor for those who are left behind. But we CAN cross the boundaries of misguided opinion, and we can try to see beyond the camouflage of traditional superstitions.

Yes, the first (though not the easiest) commandment is kindness. Be good to yourself. Give love and honor to the memory of that broken life.

Sascha Wagner, from *The Sorrow and The Light*  
(Sascha's daughter, Eve, died of suicide)

*Love Gifts*

*Our chapter is a self-help group with no required dues. We rely solely on contributions. Your donations help us pay for the cost of this newsletter, the postage, all the books in our library, meeting and event supplies which are a great help to bereaved parents.*

**Your contributions are tax deductible and very sincerely appreciated. The following donations were received since the last Primrose deadline:**

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## LOVE Gifts Contined ...



I made a huge oops with the last newsletter and I want to apologize to all those parents whose children's names did not end up in our Children Remembered pages. I accidentally posted the summer children in the Fall newsletter. This month I have included both Fall and Winter in the Children Remembered Pages.

Please let me know if there are any changes that I need to make to your child's or your information.

Val Ambrose, Newsletter Editor

### \*\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*\*

*The Primrose Newsletter, published quarterly, is available for a year with a suggested subscription of \$10.00. You may pay as little or as much as you like towards our newsletter printing and mailing fund. Your expiration date is shown in the lower right hand corner of your mailing label. Please let me know by this date if you wish to continue receiving the Primrose. This is my way of knowing if you want the newsletter.*

Send your Tax deductible donations to: Mrs. Valerie Ambrose 730 River Rd. Binghamton, NY 13901

Make checks payable to: *The Compassionate Friends Broome*



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please check if new Address

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ (if new) State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ DoD \_\_\_\_\\_\_\_\_\\_\_\_\_

Newsletter \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Library \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Generic \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please specify if there is a specific fund you want the money used for (newsletter, books, supplies, ect...)

**ALL donations are mentioned in the Love gift section of the newsletter.**

## LOVE AND HOPE

On a cold winter day the sun went out  
Grief walked in to stay  
I turned away from the unwanted guest  
And bid him be on his way.

Grief was merciless, he brought his friends,  
Loneliness, Fear and Despair.  
They walk these rooms unceasingly  
In the somber cloaks they wear.

Every so often now, Love pays a call  
She always has Hope by her side  
I welcome Love as well as Hope  
For I thought surely they had died.

Love counsels Grief in a most gentle way  
Bids him be still for a while  
Then Love walks with me  
through memory's hall  
And for a time...I can smile.

Kerry Marston, TCF, Grand Junction, CO

## VALENTINE MESSAGE

I send this message to my child  
Who no longer walks this plane,  
A message filled with love  
Yet also filled with pain.

My heart continues to skip a beat  
When I ponder your early death  
As I think of times we'll never share  
I must stop to catch my breath.

Valentine's Day is for those who love  
And for those who receive love, too  
For a parent the perfect love in life  
Is the love I've given you.

I'm thinking of you this day, my child,  
With a sadness that is unspoken  
As I mark another Valentine's Day  
With a heart that is forever broken.

Annette Mennen Baldwin TCF Katy, TX  
In Memory of my son, Todd Mennen



***The Compassionate Friends***

***Broome County Chapter***  
**Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

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